

Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) spoke and answered crowd-generated questions at the City Club in Chicago, IL.

City Club Representative: Our guest, today, was elected to represent Illinois' fifth congressional district nearly four years ago. Prior to that, he served as Cook County Commissioner. As Paul mentioned, he did his undergraduate work at Roosevelt. He earned his master's degree in public policy at University of Chicago. And last week, our guest today was appointed to the prestigious Appropriations Committee. He is a graduate of Loyola University School of Law. He and his wife Barbara, and daughters Alyson and Meghan live in Lakeview. Ladies and gentlemen, Congressman Mike Quigley. Congressman.

Mike Quigley: Thank you. Good afternoon.

You know, I've got to stop talking to people before I give my speech, because sometimes people say things and I have to change what I was going to present. Someone said, "Congressman, I love coming to your speeches because we really want to hear your complex public policy." So now I have to take out the references to "Here Comes Honey Boo-Boo". And it was gonna kill.

It's true, I have been appointed to the Appropriations Committee, and I want to thank those of you who congratulated me. I got a lot of texts, e-mails, phone calls, letters and notes. The one that really stuck out was from our Mayor: "Congratulations, Mike. I look forward to working with you. I'm proud of you. This is really important to our city." Anywho, I read the back and it said "By the way, you're working for me now." I'm sure he meant that in the nicest possible way.

It's interesting following the Mayor in jobs, folks. You'll have to try it sometime. You know, he

was the congressman before me and I took his place in Congress. People say, “are you now going to run for mayor someday?” And I think he’s pretty happy in the job, but I’ve already decided I’m not going to run for mayor until the parking meter deal is over. It’s only seventy-five years. And, by the way, we are parked in front those meters. If anybody has change for a hundred, it would help us a great deal.

To get on Appropriations, you have to be a team player. You have to help other people, you have to raise money. So, you for what’s called a leadership PAC. And since I play hockey twice a week, I gave it an appropriate name. I called it Puck PAC, right? One goal for Illinois: Puck PAC. So, I got a call from the Mayor, and I said: “No, Rahm, It’s with a ‘P’.”

I’ve discovered when I do stand up in DC, I just talk about Rahm for twenty minutes, and it just works wonders.

And I want to thank the City Club for having me. I’ve got to take my turn thanking a few people. At our table, I see *Tom Bowen and Pete Giangreco*. Tom ran my special election as well as Bill Foster’s, and Pete is a great political consultant: does the mail for everybody. To my friends who want to be the next congressman from the second congressional district, here’s a tip: hire them, but special elections are not smaller versions of regular elections. You really have to know what you’re doing. You have to target your base, and folks like those would be a good start.

I see, she happens to be sitting here, Jennifer Kohler who now works for the governor, so she answers to a large python, apparently, these days. I also see my new district director, Mary Ann Levar, yay Mary Ann. I see Anabel and Bob Becker who helped me with this presentation today. I hope I don’t forget anyone. My new political director, Ben, sitting right there. And Aviva.

Aviva Bowen was my district director. People in government office take a lot of heat for a lot of reasons. Public servants do as well. You rarely find someone who is as hard-working and talented, and who cares about what she does, as Aviva. The reason I’m saying this is she’s leaving, she’s gonna go work for the teachers. Our loss is clearly their gain. And I can be nice to her now. I know she says she’s here to say goodbye, but she’s really just here for the lemon cookies. Let’s hear it. She deserves it for all she did for us.

And again, I want to thank the City Club. I know when all of this is over, I get a mug. I have several of these mugs now, and I hear that after you get a certain number, you can them in for the City Club steak knives, so I'm looking forward to that.

It's interesting, I got elected four years ago, a real honor. And at the time I got elected, the Congress' approval rating was fourteen percent, which put us right in there with personal injury attorneys, used car-salesmen, or a soon-to-be indicted, former Illinois governor.

You wonder what it's like coming from Illinois, hey folks, I'm the one that hears the jokes all the time on the floor of the House. 'What did one Illinois governor say to the other Illinois governor.. oh, no.. What did one prisoner say to the other prisoner? The food was better here when you were governor.' The point being, we were at fourteen percent, and now, through all of this work, we're at eight percent. And I guess it's not any wonder. The hundred and twelfth congress, that just concluded, was fraught with manufactured conflict, self-inflicted pain, and at times it did feel more like a reality TV show than a legislative body. See there was the Honey Boo-Boo reference. And again, it was going to kill.

It seemed like colleagues would say anything or do anything not to get voted off the island. Welcome to "Survivor—Congressional Edition." The problem with that kind of programming is it may get good ratings, but it's really bad government. Brinksmanship, crisis management, living on the edge—that's where we've been for the past two years.

Obviously that hasn't been lost upon the public. Commentators like The New York Times' Tim Egan describe members of Congress as lacking "the ability to divide up juice boxes in a kindergarten."

We've budgeted with Continuing Resolutions, basically that says how we're going to operate the largest government in the universe for the next two months, and held endless partisan committee hearings aimed at dismantling so-called "job killing" legislation like the Clean Air Act. We voted 33 times to repeal all or part of the President's healthcare plan, and we attempted to balance the federal government's budget by zeroing out Planned Parenthood. We've done that all with an eye on the latest polls and the 24-hour news cycle, ignoring what really needs to be done; what really deserves our sense of urgency.

How intense should that urgency be? Well, I am reminded of comments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 40 years ago when he urged Americans to speak out against the Vietnam War. He said, “We are confronted by the fierce urgency of now.” Since Dr. King’s address, the struggles have changed but the need for urgency has never been greater.

We again find ourselves in a conflict that threatens the political fabric of our nation, the integrity of our institutions. We face a mountain of debt. We lack a comprehensive approach to climate change, energy, transportation, Medicare, Social security, defense spending, immigration reform, gun violence and even our postal system. And, oh by the way, we need to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act.

This is disturbing. It’s not a good sign that we had to wait until the 11th hour to find the urgency to approve tax relief for a majority of Americans...Nor is it a good sign that we jeopardized our credit rating before finding the urgency to act on the debt ceiling.

And allow me a brief aside, here: we need to raise the debt ceiling. The President should use whatever power he has under his command, unilaterally, rather than let those.. hold our economy hostage in a current brand of hooliganism. I believe the fourteenth amendment is clear. The debt of the United States shall not be questioned. I get it, we have to reduce our debt, but we also have to pay our bills.

During Ronald Reagan’s presidency, the debt ceiling was raised eighteen times. And President Reagan warned the US of the dire consequences if the US failed to meet its obligations. A warning that has been echoed in the years since by every serious economist.

We need to find that urgency of now, which Dr. King spoke of, to address the problems that can’t be solved in a lame duck session or last-minute shuttle diplomacy between the White House and the Speaker’s office. And by the way, Speaker Boehner says “no more private meetings with the president.” That’ll help.

We need that urgency to get started now on creating a sensible energy policy that confronts climate change and reduces our reliance on foreign oil. We need that urgency to formulate a transportation plan so that states can address their crumbling infrastructure and local businesses can get back to work. We need the urgency of now to reconfigure our national

defense policy, making sensible cuts and fashioning a force that prepares us for conflicts of the future and not the past. We need the urgency now to make sensible changes to Social Security and Medicare to ensure the vitality of those programs for generations to come. That urgency of now will reward us with more than a sensible environmental policy, good roads, a smarter defense department and sustainable social welfare system. We will be rewarded with a stable economy and reduced market volatility.

Today we are a little more than a month from our next set of manufactured crises: another divisive fight over the debt ceiling. And you'll pardon me for feeling a little like Bill Murray. It's like Groundhog Day: I've been there before. Are we really going to go through this again...jeopardize the credit rating?

Let me tell you what I saw, the night, the last night we raised our debt ceiling, folks. People on the floor looking up at the vote, right. And all of them, almost all of them recognized that if we didn't raise the debt ceiling, that markets, many, very soon in Europe, would start to collapse. They knew what it meant for job loss and so-forth, yet they waited until there was enough votes so they could afford to vote 'no'. Profiles in Courage, John F. Kennedy must have been looking the other way.

It's not that the crisis isn't real. We are borrowing forty-two cents of every dollar we spend, so we have to reduce this debt and deficit without stepping on this fragile economic recovery. Towards this end, I signed on the Cooper-LaTourette bipartisan budget agreement that would save \$4 trillion over 10 years...and my office has authored a comprehensive plan to reinvent government and save taxpayers several trillion over the next ten years.

I wrote similar reports as a Cook County Commissioner. Let me tell you the difference. People used to want me to vote the massive cuts at the eleventh hour, even back then. That's not what reinventing is all about. Reinventing looks at government and says, "what should we do, how should we do it, and who should do it. If we started over, how would you do all of those things?"

And it's not because government is unimportant, or we hate it, or as Grover Norquist said, "we want it small enough to drown in a bath tub." Government is important. The heroes of 9-11 were government workers. Government protects us. Government teaches our kids. Government protects us in ways people only think about when it's actually risked. So, we need to get serious about that and think about that in a way that's not at this last moment.

The Tea Party has this wrong. The objective should not be to destroy government through draconian cuts. There is a better way to do that through a systematic thought process that unfortunately there isn't a model for in the current congress.

I'm going back today to vote on one bill: Sandy. The second part of Sandy relief. Tomorrow we have a few votes, then there's no votes 'til next Tuesday, the day after the inaugural. So, we have maybe four days of voting or any kind of activity for the rest of this month. That's not going to get it done.

What level of optimism I had, this last level of the fiscal cliff voting came about because Speaker Boehner allowed the so-called Hastert rule to be violated. He allowed a bill not supported by a majority of the majority to get on the floor.

I have a long set of lists available on our website of how to deal with these cuts in a meaningful, thoughtful way. I recognize that not everybody that I serve with would agree on how to cut defense and social programs to make them sustainable over time, but that's sorta the whole point, is that you have to compromise. Bobby Rush said it best: "In DC, peoples' view of compromise is that the other guy gives in." It simply can't be that way.

When I got there, I talked to Mark Kirk on the floor. He was a member of the House at the time, and he said "everything here gets done in the middle." And he's right, but what really happened is the middle part of this body got pulled over to the right, really by a minority of the minority.

Until we end the skewing of that process, you will see the deadlock that's taking place. That's extraordinarily risky for us.

So, I want to thank you for your time and your interest.

I want to thank you again for your time and your interest. It's an honor to be invited to speak before such an accomplished body.

As Lincoln said, "We can only succeed only by concert. It is not 'can any of us imagine better?' but, 'can we do better?'" And those words are true today... we have to abandon the dogmas of yesterday to fulfill the promise of tomorrow.

"We cannot escape history," Lincoln said. "We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves." Despite the immense challenges that confront us, I believe we have the chance to make history...to solve the myriad problems...to make a brighter day for generations to come. But to do so, we need to find that "urgency of now," that resolve to tackle the big issues and the tough problems.

I'm honored to serve the people of the 5th District and I'm excited about the role I can play on Appropriations to serve my city, my district, my county - to make sure everybody is happy - my region, my state, all of you. I will be there fighting for you.

Through it all, I am still optimistic, but I know what you're thinking: What does that mean? You're a Cub fan. Anybody can have a bad century, okay? And I don't need Bowen and other smart alec Sox fans reminding me, "Hey, we won one championship in a hundred years, we're so much better than you." It just keeps getting better. But there's still hockey. Go Hawks. Thank you so much for the honor of being here today. Now, I'd be delighted to answer some of your questions.

Paul M. Green: On your table, Alderman Moore's always firstest with the mostest, good. Write 'em brief. Congressman Quigley is here coming back from Washington, and everything else, he's got to be nervous, because as you know, the western end of his district touches the Mississippi, so he's got to be somewhat careful on that. And also, those of us who've been around Chicago politics remember that every campaign wasn't always successful.

Mike Quigley: Yes.

Paul M. Green: The fighting forty-six.

Mike Quigley: I appreciate you bringing that up. It's been awhile since I pulled that scab off.

Paul M. Green: Alright, you know you've got to bring 'em down. You just can't keep going up here like this. Alright, this is from Alderman Joe Moore from the fighting forty-ninth ward. "What are the odds that any reasonable restriction to the sale of assault weapons will be enacted this year?"

Mike Quigley: I'm banking that Sammy Sosa will be in the Hall of Fame before we pass meaningful gun legislation.

Look, I kid about that, but it's as depressing a thought as I've ever seen here. 'Cause, what bothers me is that Congress isn't even reflecting the American public. The majority of the public and the majority of gun owners don't want bad people to have guns.

It's like two thirds of NRA members want background checks, but today, you can go to a gun show in thirty-three states and buy anything you want. You can be a convicted felon, you can have been adjudicated dangerously mentally ill, you can be a serial spousal abuser, you can be on a terrorist watch-list- and we see that several hundred times each year, people we suspect of being terrorists buying guns at gun shows – and you can go buy anything you want. And oh by the way, you can buy a weapon meant for warfare with a thirty round clip or a hundred round clip.

And I know they went through, and I say this, it is the gospel. When you have an assault weapon, and it's a thirty-round clip or a hundred-round clip, you're not protecting your home, you're not protecting your business, you're not hunting deer, you're hunting people.

Unfortunately, this congress will not act, and I don't even think you'll even see a bill on the floor.

Paul M. Green: A little uplifting answer... Mark Ryan Miller, coming through – by the way, watch the grease on the question... We got a congressman here. "Please name federal programs you can cut to save money or trim." Just pick three or four.

Mike Quigley: Look, I'll just do defense today, because I want to be safe. We have fifty attacks on this country since 9-11, almost 50. Every one of them has been thwarted; has been thwarted with intelligence, right, the fact that we have people who can interpret, right, and the fact that we have people gutsy enough to act in anti-terrorist programs.

Alright, close to home, we have terrorist attacks. A person just went to jail a block from my house at Clark and Eddy Street, folks. At the Dave Matthews concert, put what he thought was a bomb right there. He was thwarted by very good police work. We have to reprioritize our defense system.

We instead use the Department of Defense as our only jobs program. I voted to eliminate the tenth destroyer that we purchased this year. It's a billion dollars. Actually, a guy in a union was very upset with me. "Do you know how many jobs a destroyer creates?" I said, "Do you know how much bridge you can buy for a billion dollars?"

We're still in a Cold War footing. Sixty-five years after the second World War, we still have 125,000 troops in Asia and eastern Europe. We still have 2,500 nuclear weapons ready to use, and 5,00 in stock-pile, which will cost hundreds of billions to maintain.

The Department of Defense is not able to be audited right now. It can't even tell you how it's spending its money. And it's optimistic that in nine years it will be audit-ready. As Mr. Gates said, "it is an entity that needs to start thinking about how to be restrained spending its money."

Paul M. Green: Okay, we have another question on assault weapons from Edbert Hoffman. Basically, the last line is the one that you should respond to. "Why is all of the attention of potential legislation being focused on assault weapons, and virtually none on hand guns?" I would assume that's an even tougher road to home.

Mike Quigley: Look, this will tell you how tough the road is. We were in the majority when I first got there. In the 110th Congress, the Democrats controlled both the House and the Senate. These incidents, that you read about, in Chicago every day, but in the nation, once a month or so, are extraordinarily tragic, had no effect. They had zero committee

meetings in the 110th congress. So, to think, that we'll be able to get past the most extreme aspects of gun violence, which to me is who gets guns and what type of guns they have, is wildly optimistic.

I remind those folks that the Supreme Court, when they threw out Chicago's handgun ban, the author said, "this second amendment exists, but it's not, like all rights, it's not unlimited. It doesn't mean anyone can have any kind of gun, anywhere they want."

You know, that made a lot of sense, because I watched the debate at the Supreme Court, right, when Chicago was there making its case. I went through three metal detectors. So I think somewhere in the back of these justices' minds is, "eh, maybe we don't want to make this totally unlimited." And if you're not going to ask questions, you should at least be safe. Think about it.

Paul M. Green: Ah, good light. I gotta be careful, I got that table over there. Lori Miller, last question, then we can send him on his way to go help out those Sandy survivors: "What changes, if any, would you propose to Medicare and Medicaid, in order to get deficits in line?"

Mike Quigley: Well, look, there's been questions about if the Democrats would be willing to do anything on entitlement programs and Social Security. I think the president answered that during the last debate, discussion with Speaker Boehner in the big compromise that was supposed to be. He put \$400 billion worth of reform cuts in Medicare. He also, in Social Security, talked about changed CPI for the first time, which would reduce the funding gap on Social Security - which we're worried will run out fairly soon - by 25%.

I think the fundamental difference is, besides it needing to be a well-thought-out plan, and not at the eleventh hour, as this one will certainly be, is people like Paul Ryan were talking about competitive bidding on healthcare insurance that will deal with Medicare and senior citizens, cause "that'll save money".

Well, look, 189% since 1999 in the private sector, it's gone up faster than Medicare costs. There are cuts that save money through reforms of the process and how we deliver healthcare systems. It is the fundamental aspect of how is this process, how do we pay for healthcare, and how do we reduce the underlying costs, where a lot of savings can be made, versus the "you're on your own now, folks." Cause, let's remember, these aren't just numbers on a page. Social

Security keeps 35% of senior citizens out of poverty.

So, I remind my colleagues to think about those things and that there are answers that don't harm people. They don't harm beneficiaries. They make cuts, but they don't harm beneficiaries. That's the way we're going to need to look at this, and hopefully the better angles of our nature will shine through as we come to these important tasks. And I know they matter in Illinois too, and a lot of my colleagues are out there facing these tough choices.

This is a great job. I am the luckiest person in the world. It is through some sort of luck and pluck that I got to be here, but I would say to all of my colleagues in congress who serve at the county and city and state level, "you've got to be willing to risk this to do the right thing, to save these systems that are so important and the fundamental aspects of our country, because we do live in the greatest country in the world."

Thanks again, so much. We'll see you soon.

